

Safety & Health Update

April 2015

Division of Workers' Compensation

This monthly e-newsletter provides updates on the Workplace Safety Programs of the Division of Workers' Compensation (DWC). Both subscribers and non-subscribers of workers' compensation insurance are eligible for these services.

Transportation Safety Information

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Distracted Driving Awareness

April is National Distracted Driving Awareness Month. Distracted driving involves any activity that might divert a person's attention away from the primary task of driving, including the following:

- talking, texting, or using a phone in any other way;
- eating or drinking;
- talking to passengers;
- grooming;
- reading, including maps;
- using a navigation system;
- watching a video; and
- adjusting a radio, CD player, or MP3 player.



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Safety Tips

Protecting Employees from Heat-Related Illnesses

As Heat Awareness Day (May 27, 2015) and the warmer months approach, DWC urges Texas employers and employees to help prevent heat-related injuries and illnesses. During the warm months many dangers exist for all people working outdoors or in hot environments, ranging from sun-damaged skin to fatal illnesses.



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Transportation Safety Information (cont.)

Distracted Driving Awareness (cont.)

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) is continuing the *Talk. Text. Crash. Distracted Driving Campaign* to raise awareness of the dangers associated with distracted driving.

Here are a number of facts that illustrate the dangers of distracted driving:

- In 2013, there were 94,943 traffic crashes in Texas that involved distracted driving (distraction, driver inattention or cellphone use). These crashes resulted in 18,576 serious injuries and 459 deaths. Nearly one in five crashes in Texas involves driver distraction. (TxDOT)
- The number one source of driver inattention is use of a wireless device. [Virginia Tech, National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA)]
- Drivers who use cell phones are four times as likely to get into crashes serious enough to injure themselves. (NHTSA, Insurance Institute for Highway Safety)
- Ten percent of drivers ages 16 to 24 years are on their cell phone at any one time. (Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company Survey)
- Driving while using a cell phone reduces the amount of brain activity associated with driving by 37 percent. (Carnegie Mellon University)
- Distraction from cell phone use while driving (hand held or hands free) impairs a driver's reaction time as much as having a blood alcohol concentration at the legal limit of .08 percent. (University of Utah)
- Brain power used while driving decreases by 40 percent when a driver listens to conversation or music. (Carnegie Mellon University Center for Cognitive Brain Imaging)
- More than 80 percent of drivers admit to blatantly hazardous behavior: changing clothes, eating, steering with a foot, painting nails and shaving. (Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company Survey)

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Download!

DWC Resources

The DWC offers the following free driving safety publications:

- *Driving Distractions FactSheet*; and
- *Driving and Using Cellular Telephones Safety Training Program*.

These publications, available in both English and Spanish, can be downloaded from the agency website at <http://www.tdi.texas.gov/wc/safety/videoresources/targtransrltd.html>, along with more than 30 other driving safety publications.

The DWC features a free occupational safety and health DVD loan library. Call 512-804-4620 for more information or visit the TDI website at <http://www.tdi.texas.gov/wc/safety/videoresources/avcatalog.html>. DVDs on many driving dangers can be found under the following headings:

- *Driving Safety*;
- *Transportation Safety* (includes safe operation of buses and vans); and
- *Trucking Safety* (covers professional trucking, both straight trucks and tractor trailers).

These DVDs include the following titles:

Driven to Distraction
DVD1944ES (20 min.)

Driven to Distraction II
DVD2886ES (20 min.)

Master Driver: Safety Issues (covers distracted driving, road rage and security threats for professional truck drivers)
DVD2840 (21 min.)

Transportation Safety Information (cont.)

Distracted Driving Awareness (cont.)

Employers should develop a policy that ensures employee safety while driving motor vehicles. The policy should be practical, legal, and reflective of the organization's risk tolerance for activities that might distract employees while they are driving. The policy should state that the primary function of the driver is to drive the vehicle. If additional tasks that inhibit the safe operation of the vehicle are necessary, those tasks should be handled by a passenger/co-worker or when the vehicle is stopped in a safe place. The policy should also include the potential disciplinary actions that employees face for violating the policy.

Once a policy has been developed, employers should ensure that drivers understand the reason for the policy, including the increased odds of an accident, the potential liability for the company, and the possibility of personal injuries or fatalities. Outline the ways in which distractions increase these risks so drivers will understand how to reduce their odds of an accident. It is important to reinforce the policy by providing all new hires with a copy and reviewing it in detail during their orientation; covering safe motor vehicle operations in all driver-training programs; and providing periodic reminders, such as articles in an employee newsletter.

- The NHTSA offers a sample policy on its website at <http://www.distraction.gov/get-involved/employers.html>. ▲

Download!

Other Resources

More information about the *Talk. Text. Crash.* – *Distracted Driving Campaign*, along with many free downloadable educational resources, can be found on the TxDOT website at <https://www.txdot.gov/driver/share-road/distracted.html>.

The *Buckle Up Texas* website offers free distracted driving prevention resources such as news, educational articles, incentives, online public service announcements, and other resources on its website at <http://www.buckleuptexas.com/welcome/>.

The NHTSA maintains the official U.S. Government website for distracted driving at <http://www.distraction.gov/>, as well as marketing tools on its website at <http://www.trafficsafetymarketing.gov/>.

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has created a Safety and Health Topics Page for *Distracted Driving*, available on the OSHA website at <https://www.osha.gov/distracted-driving/index.html>.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offers a number of distracted driving prevention resources such as facts, statistics, publications and educational materials, available on the CDC website at <http://www.cdc.gov/features/dsdistracteddriving/>. The CDC offers more distracted driving information on the *Motor Vehicle Safety* site at <http://www.cdc.gov/Motorvehiclesafety/DistractedDriving/index.html>. In addition, the CDC's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) offers distracted driving prevention information geared specifically toward employers and employees on its website at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/distracteddriving/default.html>.

Safety Tips (cont.)

Protecting Employees from Heat-Related Illnesses (cont.)

Extended exposure to a hot environment can tax the body beyond its ability to cool. The effects of heat can be magnified in the very young, elderly and those with medical conditions. Knowing the signs and symptoms of heat-related illnesses and heat stress such as heat cramps, heat exhaustion and, most dangerous, heat stroke, and by taking precautions, can help prevent their onset.

Symptoms indicative of heat exhaustion, which is caused by the loss of large amounts of fluid and/or salt sweating, include: clammy and moist skin; extreme weakness or fatigue; giddiness; nausea; headache; or fainting. Warning signs of heat stroke vary, but could include: an extremely high body temperature (above 103°); red hot, and dry skin (no sweating); rapid, strong, pulse; throbbing headache; dizziness; nausea; confusion; or unconsciousness. Prompt assessment of employees experiencing any of these symptoms, and the delivery of appropriate first aid or emergency medical care are advised.

The best defense against heat-related illnesses is prevention. The following tips can aid in protecting employees from extreme heat conditions:

- ensure all of your employees have been trained in heat-related illnesses (document training);
- monitor weather forecasts to determine when a "Heat Advisory" or "Heat Alert" is in effect;
- drink 16 – 32 ounces of cool fluids each hour when working outdoors; replace salt and minerals with electrolyte drinks;
- do not rush; a slower but steady pace reduces stress on the body; avoid working in direct sunlight whenever possible, and take frequent breaks;
- protect the face and head by wearing a wide-brimmed hat;
- apply sunscreen 30 minutes prior to going out and continue to reapply according to package directions;
- wear UV-absorbent sunglasses to protect the eyes;

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Download!

DWC Resources

The DWC offers the following free safety publications, available in both English and Spanish:

- *Heat-Related Injuries and Illness Prevention*; and
- *Heat Stress Safety Training Program*.

These publications can be downloaded from the agency website at <http://www.tdi.texas.gov/wc/safety/videoresources/index.html>, along with many other safety publications.

The DWC features a free occupational safety and health DVD loan library. For more information, call 512-804-4620 or visit the TDI website at <http://www.tdi.texas.gov/wc/safety/videoresources/avcatalog.html>. DVDs related to the prevention of heat-related injuries and illnesses are located under the Heat Stress subject heading.

Other Resources

NIOSH provides information about the causes, prevention and treatment of heat related illnesses on its website at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/heatstress/>.

The Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) provides the following heat-related illness resources on its website:

- Campaign to Prevent Heat Illness in Outdoor Workers at <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/heatillness/index.html>;
- Heat Smartphone App at https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/heatillness/heat_index/heat_app.html; and
- OSHA Occupational Heat Exposure at <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/heatstress/index.html>.

The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension offers information about avoiding and treating heat-related problems on its Heat Exhaustion and Heat Stress website at http://fcs.tamu.edu/health/child_health/heat/heat_exhaustion_heat_stress.php.

The Texas State Office of Risk Management (SORM) posts a video about surviving the summer heat on its website at <http://www.sorm.state.tx.us/risk-management/surviving-the-heat>. hour poison control hotline at 1-800-222-1222.

Texas Safety Summit

19th Annual Workplace Safety and Health Conference, May 19-21

The Division of Workers' Compensation (DWC) will host the 19th Annual Workplace Safety and Health Conference, the Texas Safety Summit from May 19-21, 2015 in Austin at the Doubletree Hotel Austin, located at 6505 IH-35 North.

The DWC is hosting the conference to help employers reduce injuries and their associated costs through workplace safety and return-to-work programs. This conference is open to all segments of the Texas workforce, including small and large employers, public and private sector employers, and workers' compensation subscribers and non-subscribers. This year's general sessions will include the following presentations:

- *NIOSH Approach to Meeting Future Safety and Health Challenges* by Steve Wurzelbacher of NIOSH;
- *Understanding the Distracted Brain "Why We Can't Hang Up: The Connection Between Cell Phone Addiction, the Brain's Inability to Multitask, and Distracted Driving"* by Dr. Art Markman and Dr. Bob Duke of the University of Texas;
- *The Human Factor: Using Integrity and Safety Related Personality Assessments to Screen out High Risk* by Dennis Fox of The Client Development Group; and
- *Motor Vehicle Safety: Steering Clear of the Leading Cause of Workplace Fatalities* by Jeremy Hansen of Texas Mutual Insurance Company.

Additionally, the Texas Safety Summit will offer four optional pre-conference sessions and 25 breakout sessions covering a variety of workplace safety and health related topics such as effective safety management processes and systems, workplace violence prevention, hazardous materials and communication standards, transportation safety, regulatory compliance, and much more.

The Texas Safety Summit is a learning opportunity for all types of people in an array of industries who play a role in safeguarding Texas employees, such as office managers, human resources representatives, managers and supervisors, union safety



representatives, safety committee representatives, risk and loss control managers, occupational safety or industrial hygiene professionals, and safety trainers. The registration fee for the conference is \$275 per person if registered by May 1, 2015, and \$300 per person if registered on or after May 2, 2015. Discounted rates are available for groups or employers that send five or more participants. Texas State Technical College in Waco will provide continuing education credits (CEUs). Attendees will be eligible to receive .1 CEU per hour of attendance on May 19, 20, and 21. ▲

Register!

For additional conference information, visit the DWC website at <http://www.tdi.texas.gov/wc/safety/summithome.html>, call 512-804-4610 or e-mail safetytraining@tdi.texas.gov.

Safety Tips (cont.)

Protecting Employees from Heat-Related Illnesses (cont.)

- perform most strenuous outdoor tasks during the morning, if possible;
- wear loose-fitting, light weight, light-colored clothing;
- use a buddy system and check on employees often; monitoring for heat-related symptoms increases the chances of avoiding illness;
- avoid hot foods and heavy meals, since they add heat to the body;
- avoid caffeine and alcohol, due to their dehydrating properties; and
- ensure provisions are in place for prompt medical attention. ▲

Regional Safety Summits

Fort Worth — April 22, 2015

Region 11 Education Service Center
1451 S. Cherry Lane, White Settlement



Session Descriptions

Elements of Effective Safety Programs

Effectively managing how you protect your employees at work is a key factor in reducing the frequency and severity of work-related injuries and illnesses and related costs. This session will provide attendees an understanding of the elements that are necessary to create an effective and comprehensive safety program in the workplace. The presentation will explore seven core components commonly found in effective safety programs; cover program best practices; and discuss the positive effects of implementation. (3 hours)

Requirements of a Comprehensive Hazard Communication Program

Exposure to hazardous chemicals in the workplace can cause or contribute to many serious health effects for employees. In addition, some chemicals may be safety hazards and have the potential to cause fires, explosions, and other serious accidents. A comprehensive hazard communication program will help employers and employees understand the effects of chemicals found in the workplace, how to prevent exposure, and what to do in an emergency if exposure does occur. Written hazard

The DWC is offering a series of Regional Safety Summits that provide affordable training and instruction on common causes of preventable injuries and fatalities in the workplace, as well as current and upcoming regulations in the occupational safety and health fields.

According to the most recent data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), contact with objects and equipment surpassed falls to become the second leading cause of occupational fatalities, while falls, slips and trips were the third leading cause of occupational fatalities in Texas in 2013. The Regional Safety Summits address these and other safety issues commonly encountered in the workplace. Attendees will be able to choose the sessions that are most valuable to them.

Session Options

Session Time	Option 1	Option 2
Morning	Elements of Effective Safety Programs	Requirements of a Comprehensive Hazard Communication Program
Afternoon	OSHA Written Programs and Training Requirements	Walking and Working Surfaces, Exit Routes, and Emergency Plans

**Book Your
Training Class!**

To request training, or for more information, call 512-804-4610 or e-mail safetytraining@tdi.texas.gov.

Watch for Additional Regional Safety Summits Coming to a City Near You!

Houston: June 2015

Corpus Christi: July 2015

Waco: July 2015

Austin: August 2015

El Paso: August 2015

Dates and locations TBA

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communication programs have specific requirements that must be met in order to comply with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) General Industry standards. This session will cover OSHA's requirements regarding materials inventory, labeling, safety data sheets, and employee training. An in-class exercise will provide attendees an example of the information and skills needed to conduct training in their own workplace that complies with OSHA's requirements.
(3 hours)

OSHA Written Programs and Training Requirements

This session will review the various OSHA required and suggested written programs and training topics, including lockout-tagout, emergency action plans, and hearing conservation. Attendees will gain an understanding of when written programs must be implemented, what must be covered when conducting training, and the frequency with which training should occur. (3 hours)

Walking and Working Surfaces, Exit Routes, and Emergency Plans

Slips, trips and falls account for numerous workplace injuries every year. Maintaining clean, dry and uncluttered work environments can help prevent many of these incidents from occurring. Part one of this session will explain OSHA's General Industry standards pertaining to walking and working surfaces, including requirements for floor and wall openings, loading docks, stairways and ladders, and general housekeeping.

Part two of this session will cover the OSHA requirements for exit routes, emergency action plans and fire prevention plans. Attendees will learn the components, maintenance, safeguards, and operational features of exit routes as well as the essential elements of emergency action plans, fire prevention plans, and general fire protection best practices. (3 hours) ▲

Register!

To register, visit the TDI website at <http://www.tdi.texas.gov/wc/safety/regional.html> or call 512-804-4610. Registration fee is \$50 per person (register five people and get registration for a sixth person free). Registration includes course materials, a compact disc with all four presentations, coffee and afternoon snacks.

Custom Onsite Training

The DWC offers affordable safety training courses that can be delivered onsite to businesses, groups, and trade associations, with priority given to those industries or occupations that experience high incidences of injuries, illnesses and fatalities in Texas.

The DWC offers more than 30 onsite courses, including the following:

Landscaping and Grounds Personnel Safety

Individuals who work in landscaping, grounds keeping, nurseries, and other area of horticulture are subject to numerous industry and task-specific hazards such as noise, chemicals, insects, weather, and repetitive motion. Timely and appropriate safety training can greatly reduce worker exposures and injuries. This course is for field personnel as well as for supervisory and risk management personnel. The information is presented through a combination of lecture, discussion, videos, handouts, and hands-on training. The topics that are addressed include:

- tool, equipment, and machinery safety
- hot weather safety
- back and lifting safety
- avoiding poisonous plants and dangerous animals
- hazard identification and elimination
- safety program development and implementation

(Length: 4 hours.) Can be delivered via teleconference at no cost.

The DWC Training Program Descriptions guide located on the TDI website at <http://www.tdi.texas.gov/pubs/videoresource/ghsphstrainingp.pdf> provides information on course content and length. The cost for onsite training varies according to the travel costs to the training location. Many courses can be presented at no cost to any business/industry via teleconference or webinar. ▲

Free OSHA 10-Hour Construction Classes

The DWC offers free OSHA 10-Hour Construction classes in both English and Spanish in Austin, Fort Worth, El Paso, and Houston. Each two-day course is presented by authorized instructors and is designed to train employers and their employees in the essentials of occupational health and safety in construction. Classes cover specific OSHA standards and requirements as they apply to the construction industry and teach safety awareness, which helps in recognizing and reducing the risks of job site hazards. Participants who successfully complete the two-day course will receive an OSHA 10-Hour Construction class completion card within six to eight weeks. ▲

Register!

For additional information on these classes, visit the TDI website at <http://www.tdi.texas.gov/wc/events/index.html>.

Due to limited space, registration is required. To register or for more information on class availability, call 512-804-4610.

Safety DVDs featuring Landscape Safety

The DWC Resource Center contains approximately 4,000 DVDs in its library, including more than 40 titles related to heat stress prevention. Many titles are available in both English and Spanish. Titles and descriptions of these DVDs can be found under the subject headings *Landscape Safety* and *Heat Stress*.

Landscape Safety

Golf Cart and LSV Safety: On and Off the Course DVD2889ES

"Shows drivers how to identify hazards when operating a golf cart or low-speed vehicle (LSV). Covers basic safety rules, vehicle inspection, braking, stopping, and parking. Discusses driving on hills and slopes. Emphasizes the importance of consulting the user's manual." 17 min.

(Continue)

Groundskeeping Safety: Dealing with Bugs and Critters

DVD1020ES

"Covers basic personal protective equipment (PPE), snakes, wasps, bees, fire ants, poison ivy, poison oak and first aid." 16 min.

Groundskeeping Safety: Be a Pro!

DVD993ES

"Covers PPE, tractors, riding and push mowers, trimmers and brush-cutting equipment and blowers." 17 min.

Poisonous Plant Safety

DVD2877,DVD2877S

"Covers poison ivy, poison oak, poison sumac, plant toxicology. Gives guidance on what to do if exposed as well as preventing exposure." 12 min.

Venomous Snakes

DVD2852,DVD2852S

"Describes venomous snakes of Texas and their habitat and habits. Covers strike posture and venom toxicology. Discusses what to do if bitten and how to handle working around snakes." 23 min.

Heat Stress

DVD1112ES

"Teaches employees how to handle high heat stress environments. Explains how the body manages heat stress through its thermoregulation system. Lists the disorders associated with heat stress and their symptoms. Explains how to control heat stressors in the workplace." 16 min.

Working Safely in Hot Environments

DVD1865ES

"Shows viewers how to recognize the signs and symptoms of heat stress. Explains first aid procedures to administer when assisting victims of heat-related illnesses. Includes several scenarios that illustrate the importance of knowing the warning signs of heat stress." 15 min. ▲

Book Your DVDs!

Information on how any Texas employer or employee can check out safety DVDs for free and the DWC Resource Center catalog are available on the TDI website at <http://www.tdi.texas.gov/wc/safety/videoresources/avcatalog.html>.

DWC, OSHCON, and OSHA Recognize Five Texas Companies with Exemplary Safety Programs

The DWC's Occupational Safety and Health Consultation (OSHCON) Program and OSHA recently recognized the following Texas companies for their outstanding safety programs with renewals of their Safety and Health Achievement Recognition Program (SHARP) awards.



Advanced Aromatics, LLC, which employs 42 people at its Baytown location, manufactures organic chemicals. This company has been granted a two-year exemption from OSHA for planned inspections.

Allied Equipment, Inc., which employs 50 people at its Odessa location, manufactures natural gas processing and gas treating equipment. This company has been granted a two-year exemption from OSHA for planned inspections.

Baptist Memorials Services (Sagecrest), which employs 70 people at its San Angelo location, offers retirement community services and Alzheimer's care. This company has been granted a one-year exemption from OSHA for planned inspections.

Regal Machine Manufacturing, which employs 42 people at its Tyler location, offers progressive die stamping, tube fabrication, laser cutting, production welding, robotic welding, and assembling. This company has been granted a one-year exemption from OSHA for planned inspections.

Woodlawn Manufacturing, Ltd., which employs 150 people at its Marshall location, manufactures precision metal parts and assemblies for the defense, oil and gas, aerospace, automotive, HVAC and other industries. This company has been granted a one-year exemption from OSHA for planned inspections.

The SHARP award recognizes small, private sector Texas employers for exemplary safety management programs and low incidence rates of work-related injuries and illnesses after participation in the DWC OSHCON program.

OSHCON is a free service designed to help employers understand and comply with OSHA standards through safety consultations conducted by DWC's professional consultants. Benefits for employers participating in the OSHCON program include prevention of work-related injuries and illnesses; confirmation to their employees and customers of their commitment to safety; public acknowledgment of their safety efforts; monetary savings to the company by reducing workers' compensation costs and other costs associated with work-related injuries and illnesses; and protection of company assets such as employees, equipment, supplies, products and facilities.

Employers receiving consultation services from the OSHCON program may be eligible for SHARP status if they have fewer than 250 employees at a worksite and fewer than 500 employees corporate-wide; have operations limited to a fixed worksite; undergo a full-service OSHCON consultation; involve employees in the consultation process; correct all hazards identified by the consultation; and have days away, restricted or transfer (DART) and total case rate (TCR) injury and illness incidence rates below the national average for their industries. ▲

Find Out More About SHARP and OSHCON!

For further information about the OSHCON program and SHARP, call 1-800-687-7080, visit the OSHCON website at <http://www.txoshcon.com>, or e-mail OSHCON@tdi.texas.gov.

OSHA Update

Stand-Down for Fall Safety

OSHA will host its second annual Construction Fall Safety Stand-Down from May 4 -15, 2015. Falls are the second leading cause of death in the construction industry (the leading cause is transportation incidents, which are not all under OSHA's jurisdiction). According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) preliminary data for Texas in 2013, there were 32 fatal injuries that resulted from falls to lower levels in the construction sector. The incidence rate of nonfatal fall, slip or trip injuries that resulted in lost workdays in the construction sector was 17.7 per 10,000 full-time employees. Employers should also note that lack of proper fall protection in construction remained OSHA's most frequently cited violation between October 1, 2013 and September 30, 2014.

To recognize this often fatal hazard, tens of thousands of employers and more than a million employees across the country joined OSHA in 2014 for a weeklong Fall Safety Stand-Down, the largest occupational safety event ever held. OSHA hopes to triple these numbers during this year's Fall Safety Stand-Down. During this two-week event, employers and employees will pause during the workday for topic talks, demonstrations and training on how to use safety harnesses, guard rails and other protective measures.

OSHA would like to encourage all employees and employers that face fall hazards on the job to participate in this year's Stand-Down. The newly launched National Safety Stand-Down 2015 website, located at <https://www.osha.gov/StopFallsStandDown/resources.html>, provides the following:

- details on how to conduct a Stand-Down;
- instructions on how to receive a certificate of participation; and
- free training resources such as fact sheets, wallet cards, posters and online videos. ▲

New Educational Resources

Crystalline Silica Exposure during Countertop Manufacturing, Finishing and Installation

OSHA and NIOSH have jointly issued a hazard alert to help protect employees from significant crystalline silica exposure during the manufacturing, finishing and installing of natural and manufactured stone countertops.

Crystalline silica is found in granite, sandstone, quartzite, various other rocks and sand. Employees who inhale very small crystalline silica particles are at risk for silicosis. Symptoms of silicosis can include shortness of breath, cough and fatigue, and may or may not be obviously attributable to silica. Employees exposed to airborne crystalline silica also are at increased risk for lung cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and kidney disease.

The hazard alert, which can be found on the agency website at <https://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3768.pdf>, details what can be done at stone countertop fabrication and installation worksites to protect employees from exposure to silica. This includes monitoring the air to determine silica exposure levels; using engineering controls and safe work practices to control dust exposure; and providing employees with respiratory protection when needed, training, and information about the hazards of silica. ▲

Download!

More information on silica hazards and how to prevent them is available on the OSHA website at <https://www.osha.gov/dsg/topics/silicacrystalline/index.html>.

OSHA Bulletin Warns of Hazards from Exposure to Grain Fumigants

OSHA has released a Safety and Health Information Bulletin warning of hazardous exposure to chemical fumigants used in insect control in stored grain. The use of chemical fumigants can result in hazardous exposures to employees involved in the handling of both fumigants and treated grain. An upsurge in insect infestations and the movement of stored grain have contributed to the need for increased fumigation, putting exposed employees at increased risk. The toxic effects of these fumigants can include permanent central nervous system damage, heart and vascular disease, lung edema and cancer.

The bulletin outlines the exposure risks and provides employers with measures to take in evaluating grain handling facilities and transit carriers, such as truck trailers, railroad cars and barges, and can be found on the agency website at <https://www.osha.gov/dts/shib/shib010615.html>. ▲

Free OSHA Compliance Assistance

The DWC provides a free compliance assistance service for small businesses with fewer than 250 employees at any one facility, and no more than 500 employees nationwide through its OSHCON Program. OSHCON is a non-regulatory program, and its professional safety and health consultants are available to help you identify and eliminate occupational hazards in your workplace, whether or not your company carries workers' compensation insurance. ▲

Find Out More About OSHCON!

For information about the OSHCON program and assistance with OSHA standards, contact the DWC at 1-800-687-7080 or OSHCON@tdi.texas.gov, or visit the OSHCON website at <http://www.txoshcon.com>

Report Unsafe Working Conditions

The DWC Safety Violations Hotline is a bilingual, 24-hour, toll-free telephone line that allows Texas employees to confidentially report unsafe working conditions to the DWC. By law, your employer is responsible for providing a safe work environment for you. While working, you may encounter safety and health hazards that could cause injury, illness or death.

The Safety Violations Hotline allows you, the employee, to take an active role in preventing workplace injuries, illnesses and fatalities. After the DWC receives a report of a work-related safety or health issue, its safety inspectors will work with the employer and insurance carrier to help eliminate hazards.

Employers are prohibited by law from retaliation, and may not suspend, terminate the employment of or otherwise discriminate against an employee for using the telephone service to report in good faith an alleged violation of an occupational safety or health law. ▲

Report a Safety Violation

Report workplace safety or health hazards to the Safety Violations Hotline by calling 1-800-452-9595 or use the online form at <http://www.tdi.texas.gov/wc/safety/hotline.html>. Reports of violations may be made anonymously.

For questions about workers' compensation claims, call the DWC at 1-800-252-7031. To report other non-safety related workplace issues, contact 2-1-1 Texas by dialing 211 on your telephone for information about how to get in touch with the appropriate agency.

A Proactive Return to Work Process Will help Employers Reduce and Control Workers' Compensation Costs

The longer an injured employee is away from work, the higher an employer's workers compensation and related business costs will be, and the worse the impact of the injury is on the employee.

We often hear about the advantages of early return to work, but seldom hear how to successfully "do" it. Eliminating medically unnecessary lost time by having a procedure allowing and encouraging an injured employee to continue to do productive work while they recover benefits both the employer and the employee. Employers frequently believe that they do not have the time or resources to provide modified work opportunities.

The DWC provides seminars, consultations and a printed guide to help employers develop a process that suits their particular businesses and workforce needs. The information available through the DWC explores work assignment options that may not have been considered in the past. Reducing absences and costly turnover are added bonuses of a return-to-work program.

Assistance from the DWC will help employers:

- Learn how to work more effectively with claims adjusters, since employer involvement is critical in managing costs and reducing lost time;
- Understand their role and the roles of the treating doctor and claims adjuster;
- Learn how to avoid the pitfalls employers often face when attempting to bring injured employees back to work;
- Take the necessary steps to implement a return-to-work program; and
- Make "real" modified job assignments.

By returning injured employees to work while they are recuperating, they will be earning wages instead of collecting benefits that needlessly could drive workers' compensation insurance premiums higher and higher.▲

Download!

Additional information, including the *Making Return to Work - Work - for Your Business and Your Employees* guide, can be found on the agency website at <http://www.tdi.texas.gov/wc/rtw/index.html>.

Book Your Seminar or Consultation!

To arrange for a seminar or consultation, to receive printed copies of the employer guide, or for additional information, call 512-804-4804 or e-mail pat.crawford@tdi.texas.gov.

Upcoming Safety Observances

April 1-30

National Distracted Driving Awareness Month

April 28

Workers' Memorial Day

May 1-31

National Electrical Safety Month

May 3-9

North American Occupational Safety & Health Week

May 4-15

National Safety Stand-down to Prevent Falls in Construction

May 27

Heat Awareness Day

CONTACT US!

FREE OSHA COMPLIANCE ASSISTANCE

- Occupational Safety and Health Consultation (OSHCON) Program

<http://www.txoshcon.com>

1-800-687-7080

OSHCON@tdi.texas.gov

SAFETY & HEALTH RESOURCES

- Free Safety and Health Publications

<http://www.tdi.texas.gov/wc/safety/videoresources/index.html>

- Free Audiovisual Loans

<http://www.tdi.texas.gov/wc/safety/videoresources/avcatalog.html>

512-804-4620

- Safety Training Courses and Seminars

512-804-4610

safetytraining@tdi.texas.gov

- Helpful Safety and Health Resource Links

<http://www.tdi.texas.gov/wc/safety/videoresources/govunivlinks.html>

DWC RESOURCE CENTER

512-804-4620

ResourceCenter@tdi.texas.gov

OCCUPATIONAL INJURY AND ILLNESS DATA

- Survey of Occupational Injuries and Illnesses (SOII)

<http://www.tdi.texas.gov/wc/safety/sis/nonfatalhomepag.html>

512-804-5020

InjuryAnalysis@tdi.texas.gov

- Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries (CFOI)

<http://www.tdi.texas.gov/wc/safety/sis/fathomepage.html>

512-804-5020

CFOI@tdi.texas.gov

REPORT A SAFETY VIOLATION OR HAZARD

- Safety Violations Hotline

Reports are taken in both English and Spanish and may be made anonymously.

1-800-452-9595

<http://www.tdi.texas.gov/wc/safety/hotline.html>

RETURN TO WORK PROGRAM ASSISTANCE

512-804-5000

<http://www.tdi.texas.gov/wc/rtw/index.html>

To subscribe to receive e-mail alerts when the *Safety & Health Update* newsletter is published online, plus additional information on occupational safety and health matters, including safety tips and publications, upcoming training events, training DVD loans and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) updates, visit the TDI website at <http://www.tdi.texas.gov/alert/dwcsafetyhealth.html>.

Please forward this newsletter to friends and colleagues interested in preventing workplace injuries and illnesses.

Have a safe day!